Merritt Parkway, Round Hill Road Bridge
Spanning the Merritt Parkway at the 3.5 mile mark
Greenwich
Fairfield County
Connecticut

HAER No. CT-68

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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Location:	Spanning the Merritt Parkway at the 3.5 mile mark in Greenwich, Fairfield County, Connecticut at exit 28 UTM: 18.612065.4548720 Quad: Glenville, Connecticut
Construction Date:	1935
Engineer:	Connecticut Highway Department
Architect:	George L. Dunkelberger, of the Connecticut Highway Department, acted as head architect for all Merritt Parkway bridges.
Contractor:	Peter Mitchell Construction Company Greenwich, Connecticut
Present Owner:	Connecticut Department of Transportation Wethersfield, Connecticut
Present Use:	Used by traffic on Round Hill Road to cross the Merritt Parkway
Significance:	The bridges of the Merritt Parkway were predominately inspired by the Art Deco and Art Moderne architectural styles of the 1930s. Experimental forming techniques were employed to create the ornamental characteristics of the bridges. This, combined with the philosophy of incorporating architecture into bridge design and the individuality of each structure, makes them distinctive.
Historians:	Todd Thibodeau, HABS/HAER Historian Corinne Smith, HAER Engineer August 1992

For more detailed information on the Merritt Parkway, refer to the Merritt Parkway History Report, HAER No. CT-63.

LOCAL HISTORY

In July 1640, Daniel Patrick and Robert Feake, as agents of the New Haven Colony, purchased all lands between the Assmick and Potommuck brooks from local Indians. To protect their settlement Patrick and Feake signed allegiance to the Dutch at New Amsterdam, in 1642. Two years later, the Dutch raised a 130-man army and defeated the Petuquapean Indians at the site of the present village of Cos Cob in Greenwich.[1]

In 1650, a treaty was signed that defined the boundary line between Connecticut and New Amsterdam, removing Greenwich from Dutch control. Six years later, Greenwich again came under the jurisdiction of the New Haven Colony and started to prosper. In the next century, farmers settled throughout the almost fifty square miles of Greenwich. By 1756, there were nine districts in the town: Greenwich, Old Town, Horseneck, Cos Cob, North Street, Pecksland, Round Hill, Quaker Ridge, Stanwich,and Glenville. Trade with New York City prospered as ports developed at Cos Cob and the mouth of the Mianus River. The shoe-making industry developed at Banksville and Stanwich.[2]

With the arrival of the railroad in 1848, Greenwich commenced to change. The train reduced the time required to get to New York City. The town flourished as more and more New Yorkers traveled to Connecticut, seeking a haven from the noise and pollution of the city. By the 1920s, Greenwich was a well-established commuter suburb.[3]

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[1]"Development of Old Greenwich." Greenwich Press, 17 October 1935, p. 27.

[2]William E. Finch, "Greenwich--The History of a Border Town," (Manuscript, Greenwich Public Library Vertical File), 1-2.

[3]Finch, 6.

As farms gave way to residential homes, traffic continued to increase on the Post Road/U.S. Route 1. Local residents soon sought an alternative to the dangerous old highway. When Commissioner Macdonald suggested building an alternative road, Greenwich's residents quickly adhered to the idea. But conflicts developed as it came time to determine a specific route.

Originally, eight different plans were put forth. This eventually became a contest between two routes. Macdonald wanted a northern route going through Round Hill, North Street, and Stanwich (this become known as the Greenwich Loop). Local residents, including Highway Superintendent P. L. Minor, wanted a more southerly route through Pecksland. They felt this route would be more convenient, less expensive to build and necessary in the near future. Furthermore, local leaders preferred destroying the lower valued properties along the Pecksland route than disrupting wealthy estates to the north. Macdonald threatened to start construction at the east end of the parkway to gain support for his plan. With this obstacle out of the way, work began at the New York state line on June 1, 1934.[4]

BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION HISTORY

Historically, Round Hill Road was the primary link between the agricultural community of Round Hill and the market at Greenwich. During construction of the Merritt, local residents were opposed to having an exit at this interchange, because they feared the ramps would generate large

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[4]"Macdonald Sees No Road Solution," Greenwich Press, 10 September 1931, p. 1.
"Highway Superintendent Minor Proposes Southern Route," Greenwich Press, 10 March 1932, p. 1.
"Proposed Routes For the Merritt Highway," Greenwich Press, 10 March 1932, p. 8.
"Route Goes Through Round Hill, Residents Upset," Greenwich Press, 24 March 1932, p. 1.
"400 Hear Cross and Macdonald Discuss Highway," Greenwich Press, 16 November 1933, p. 1.

volumes of traffic in their neighborhood. To prevent having exits they formed the Round Hill Association. Initially this group was successful, because motorists were able to use the grade crossing at the Old Mill Road. Sentiment shifted in early 1939 when this intersection was eliminated, and locals were forced to go to the North Street interchange. By this time the Merritt Parkway was open to Weston Road/Route 57 in Westport, and Round Hill's residents were willing to permit ramps at the Round Hill Road Bridge. The ramps were completed the next year.[5]

The Peter Mitchell Construction Company of Greenwich, CT, received the contract to grade the Merritt Parkway from the New York state line to Round Hill Road, in Fairfield (ConnDot project #180-13). The contract for the Round Hill Road Bridge also went to the Mitchell Construction Company (ConnDot project #180-16).[6] The bridge cost $49,043 and was completed in 1935.[7] The paving work for this region of the Merritt extended from the state line to Round Hill Road. This contract was awarded to the A. I. Savin Company of East Hartford, CT (ConnDot project #180-90). The Round Hill Road Bridge has received little maintenance since it was built. Recently, some spalling concrete was removed and patched. In 1940, on and off ramps were added to this intersection. Sixteen years later these ramps were widened and extended.[8]

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[5]"Round Hill May Seek Entrance to the Parkway." Greenwich Press, 15 December 1938, p. 1, col. 1.

[6]Contract Card File, Map File and Engineering Records Department, Connecticut Department of Transportation, Wethersfield, CT.

[7]Round Hill Road Bridge, DOT #695; Bridge Maintenance File, Engineering Department, Connecticut Department of Transportation, Newington, CT.

[8]Round Hill Road Bridge, DOT #695; Bridge Maintenance File.

BRIDGE DESCRIPTION

The Round Hill Road Bridge is a single-span, reinforced- concrete, barrel-type rigid-frame bridge spanning 69'-3" with a clear roadway 50' wide. Parallel wing walls, 42' and 33' long, form the approach for the underpass. The Merritt Parkway travels under the bridge at a skew of 24°-30'.

The rigid-frame design allows the engineer to decrease the structural material at the center of the span, thus forming an arched opening. (See the Merritt Parkway History Report, HAER No. CT-63, for a more detailed description of the rigid frame.) The arch of the Round Hill Road Bridge is elliptical. From the springline, the arch rises 90° in a 4'-10-7/8" radius. Then the intrados of the span rises less than 3' over the next 30' to the crown. The extrados rises only a few inches from the knee to the crown. The frame thickness at the crown is 24". The frame leg thickness increases from 33" at the base to 52-3/4" at the knee. The exposed face of the legs remains vertical, and the hidden face slopes away from the roadway. Presently, the underside of the frame has spalling concrete and leakage of a black liquid from the construction joints.

The pylons at the frame legs are tall thin classical arches with quoins formed in the concrete. Miniature arches define the ends of the wing walls. The keystone in each arch is echoed at the crown of the rigid-frame. A thin band of raised concrete forms a segmental arch across the spandrel face. The railing is a simple balustrade supported on nine evenly-spaced brackets with square posts and balusters supporting the railing.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Finch, William E. "Greenwich--The History of a Border Town." Manuscript, Greenwich Public Library Vertical File.

Greenwich Press. 1931-1935.

-------. Contract Card File. Map File and Engineering Department, Connecticut Department of Transportation, Wethersfield, CT. This includes construction drawings, copies of which are in the HAER field records.

-------. Bridge Maintenance File. Engineering Department, Connecticut Department of Transportation, Newington, CT.

PROJECT INFORMATION

This recording project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey and the Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) Division of the National Park Service, Robert J. Kapsch, Chief. The Merritt Parkway recording project was sponsored and funded by the Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDot) and the Federal Highway Administration.

The fieldwork, measured drawings, historical reports and photographs were prepared under the general direction of Eric N. DeLony, HAER Chief, and Sara Amy Leach, HABS Historian.

The recording team consisted of Jacqueline A. Salame (Columbia University), architect and field supervisor; Mary Elizabeth Clark (Pratt Institute) and B. Devon Perkins (Yale University), architectural technicians; Joanne McAllister-Hewlings (US/ICOMOS-Great Britain, University of Sheffield), landscape architect; Corinne Smith (Cornell University), engineer; Gabrielle M. Esperdy (City University of New York) and Todd Thibodeau (Arizona State University), historians; and Jet Lowe, HAER photographer.